



[Page](#) | [Discussion](#) | [Edit](#) | [History](#) |

Online Committee Room

Online Committee Room

*This is part of the **Enhanced Webcasting Specification** presentation.*

Draft 0.6 - Steven Clift, Copyright 2004

Friday, September 17, 2004

Draft System Requirements Outline

While this draft was written with legislatures in mind, the "Online Committee Room" could be used at all levels of government and might be extremely useful for full local government council meetings, meetings of government appointed task forces and commissions, and not just committee meetings.

Contents
1 Goals of system
2 Pre-Meeting
3 During Meeting
4 Chair's view:
5 Member view:
6 Audience view
7 Public Remote Access/Participation
8 Post-Meeting
9 Committee Summary Module - analysis and time saver
10 Image Gallery
11 Committee Pack and Go
12 Policy Survey Module
13 Online Hearing Module
14 Citizen Panel Module
15 Reports to Legislature Review Module
16 Real-Time Module
17 Draft Notes

Goals of system

- Preserve and enhance the democratic relevancy and deliberation within the legislative committee process
- High value, quality input
- Ability to accommodate quantity without unorganized information overload
- Quality exchange of questions - use the system to help ask the right policy questions
- Member questions, ideas and opinions documented
- Public input received in multiple forms and displayed online - allowing interest group accountability and greater understanding of the complexity of policy choices and political interests
- Promote additional public testimony on the "any time, anywhere" basis that citizens expect in the information age
- Encourage citizen understanding and participation in the legislative process

Pre-Meeting

Items that may be placed online within content management system

- Agendas
- Bill links, Option for members to share draft/working amendments if desired
- Speakers List and Contact Details
- TV, Webcast Schedule Notes and Links
- Related Links to agenda items
- Pre-submitted Testimony Text, Handouts, Presentations (released when speaking or earlier at the option of person testifying) - will require web-based uploading facility and optional login accounts for those testifying
- Pre-Submitted Member remarks, questions or other materials/links
- Legislative research documents

During Meeting

- Real-time webcast
 - Audio-only option
 - Video with subtitle capabilities
 - Option for contextual links around video window to agenda items, documents etc. as they become relevant - content context links added for view within archive version as well
- Ability to share presentation slides with remote audience
- Real-time release for testimony, handouts, etc.
 - In-committee uploading and release (with anti-virus/format checking built in) - a computer somewhere in the room that accepts documents on disk, usb flash drive, cd-rom - document formatting guidelines recommended - file format, size, etc. for accessibility
 - Committees have the option of requiring digitally shared testimony before hearings to allow real-time release - must have policy on whether prior review is allowed by anyone/give those testifying the right to control when documents are available - when submitted, when hearing starts, when they speak during hearing
- Real-time release of member amendments, prepared remarks
- Vote displays
- Committee attendance display
- Optional real-time chat space for audience interaction (similar to hallway space, note passing)
- Optional - assuming limited wi-fi network, audience members in person and off-site could publicly make their presence known at their option and engage the system and each other if logged in
- Option for representatives to receive digital notes from public web form/e-mail/instant messaging

Chair's view:

- Testimony sign-up "sheet"
- Timer/clock, time allotment
- Members question queue

Member view:

- (optional lock) - To prevent member use of laptop/web browser for non-meeting business during committee meetings (noting that in MN you can use laptops in the main Chamber but not committee meetings because there you are really supposed to pay attention - need to preserve discretion of the Chair to ensure member focus and decorum)

Audience view

- WiFi access in building/rooms option - a democratic right compared to paid services or GPRS and other data services afforded by certain lobbyists
- Need noise/sound/key stroke policies/white noise

Public Remote Access/Participation

- Public login with real identity optionally promote, required or disabled where appropriate - must ensure values of decorum and respect required of the legislative institution as compare to often anonymous political discussion forums with less civil exchange
- View all real-time content-
- Ability to "annotate" or add comments to the testimony of others - option that may be turned on or off
- Remote testimony - standard video conferencing, Internet-based video conferencing - perhaps applet based using open standards?
 - Submit textual testimony/additional documents, real-time or for X amount of time after the close of the real-time meeting
 - Audio testimony - via Internet or telephone with special access code to convert and place audio in proper place
- Citizen question queue - for members eyes/public option - used at member discretion

Post-Meeting

- XX Hours/Days for Extended Public Comment and Submissions
- XX Hours/Days for "linear" (one after another) comments on testimony, comments on comments

- Member Questions - Ability for representatives to post unanswered policy questions to those who testifies, the public, others (create an opportunity for value-added input)
- Real Names - Allow committee/system to require registration with identity verification to open full account and service
 - Allow requirement to be turned off as a whole, for particular hearings where unregistered or anonymous participation is desirable or needed
 - ability to time-delay, review/remove inappropriate posts as well as the ability to limit use of that feature by event (guidelines and procedures will be required to keep within the law/freedom of expression - must make clear what the equivalent of disorderly public conduct online is in real practice online - will be extremely rare just as it is with the physical removal or arrest of protester at in-person government hearings)
- Full archive access for all materials

Committee Summary Module - analysis and time saver

- # of x,y,z statistics
- 50 word/500 character self "summary" field built in throughout - aggregated summary view
- More/external links gathered
- Committee member recommended links
- Ability to use content analysis tools/plugin-ins (likely a commercial product)

Image Gallery

- Ability to upload digital photos if taken
- Or grab webcast photos via connected computer or television cameras
- Upload standard "testimony" image for each testifier each year - ability to show photo while speaking with audio*only feed, or show on web site

Committee Pack and Go

- Convert all/selected documents into PDF format optimized for printing/paper saving - (convert XML into standard published format)

Policy Survey Module

- Ability to ask multiple choice and open-ended questions of those testifying, the interested public, the "general" public or e-citizen survey panel
- Output views built-in - use for information gathering not plebiscites or hot button issues with leading questions - survey to gather input/stories/resources
- Note Queensland and Issy, France examples

Online Hearing Module

Ability to use the system without an actual in-person committee meeting

- Set date range ... One, two, three weeks, etc.
- Establish structured "agenda" - not a "free for all" web forum for example
- Allow initial asynchronous testimony by select expert, panelists, "signed up" members of the interested public
- Support Q and A from legislators to those testifying
- Allow public commentary through out or during select times as determined by the Chair
- Upload audio, video, testimony text (require such text to be submitted via forms with limited formatting - no formatted Word or PDF documents), additional documents in various formats (Word, PDF, HTML, PPT, etc..)
- Registration system, make use of "real name" or anonymous participation an option of the Chair

Citizen Panel Module

Two options:

- An invite only system for outreach to targeted groups where

- An invite-only system for outreach to targeted groups where enhanced input is desired (clients of a specific government program, etc.) OR a "citizen jury" like approach where a sample of citizens are invited to participate
- Open System - Where targeted outreach is coupled with "those who show up" - particularly in a pre-committee hearing phase
- Offer input to meeting agendas for example????

Reports to Legislature Review Module

- Summary text collected/submitted uniformly
- Summary presentation submission from agency - slides, audio, video, etc. with time/word limits
- Full digital - multi-format access (useful for archival/historical purposes as well)

Real-Time Module

- Complement IP-based video conferencing abilities
- Moderated HTML Interview Q and A (Washington Post, US House)
- Moderated chat-based interview system with transcripts

Draft Notes

- This is an early draft. It is designed as a discussion point and is not part of any formal project.
- Creation of full system requirements would assist those with any content management system (proprietary, open source, etc.) build a state of the art system within their current technical foundation
- Ideally, a funding organization would help E-Democracy.Org and a consortium of other interested organizations build this system as a module(s) contributed to a widely used open source content management system(s) with momentum.
- The key outcome of this system would be to allow the citizens - any of us - to viably participate in representative process on our own time, from anywhere.
- The "Online Committee Room" could be used at all levels of government and might be extremely useful for full local government council meetings, meetings of government appointed task forces and commissions, and not just committee meetings.

Webcasting Home